

Skills-4U

Core skills for the 21st century

Soft Skills for Entrepreneurs

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Core Skills for 21st Century Professionals

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1. Introduction

The first thing we need to know is what an entrepreneur is. It can be understood as the person who starts a new business or task innovating. Let's analyse the meaning a little more: according to the dictionary, the verb undertakes means: "To start doing a certain thing, especially when it requires effort or work or when it has certain importance or importance". In addition, the entrepreneur is the person who: "designs, launches and puts into operation a business, starting from an innovation. The entrepreneur is an entrepreneur of innovation; in addition to launching the company, he opens a new business line, his creativity opens the doors to other entrepreneurs and to other new products."

It is very difficult as an entrepreneur to be isolated entities that simply carry out their activities. Teamwork, collaboration and the ability to interact in a "multi" way is vital: multidisciplinary, multiracial, multi-social, etc. To have the quality to know how to cultivate relationships and generate new business links that can bear fruit in allies or clients.

Interpersonal skills are competencies that are worked and harvested throughout life. That is why within the work as a businessman and as a fundamental part of strategic planning is recommended stimulation for care and personal improvement. Although as businessmen the day does not seem to have enough hours to perform courses or personal activities, see it as indispensable, as part of the human essence of the company. Think that if the entrepreneur and those who work in the company are well, they feel: motivated, optimistic, happy with themselves, etc. and this will become value that is transmitted directly to the environment. Which can generate the differential before the competition and thus enter the memory of people.

Within soft skills, adaptability to the environment and a positive attitude to learning are essential. Think that with the times, it is important to anticipate the market, have an open mind to innovate, forge humility, empathy and confidence for the generation of new ideas.

So, what does an entrepreneurial student mean? Are all the student's entrepreneurs? For Burges¹, a former entrepreneur student at Stanford University, higher education is the ideal stage to explore ideas and turn them into a business. "Students have less to lose. They don't usually have mortgages or families to worry about and distract them from their potential business," he says. According to him, there are five very important points that every young entrepreneur should keep in mind as he pursues his dreams:

1. Daring. According to Burges, most students believe that there is something preventing them from developing their idea, when in fact nothing stands in their way, it is just fear.
2. Planning. You can never be too prepared. Be sure to check all angles and scenarios, internal and external. Many online business tools can help you build your project.

¹ <http://www.educacionfutura.org/caracteristicas-de-un-alumno-emprendedor> (accessed may 2019)



3. Preparation for failure. The media is full of stories of successful entrepreneurs, but remember that many others also failed. Having an alternative plan is a good idea, as knows when to walk away. Never put your future at stake for an idea that, despite all efforts and means, has not worked.
4. Zero concerns Stress can have an impact on health and well-being, so creating a good balance is vital. If the pressure takes hold of you, back off and take a break. Look at what is causing the problem and make the necessary changes.
5. Learning from experience. It studies what successful entrepreneurs did to achieve their goals. It also investigates projects that did not succeed: what they did wrong. With the available information, you will be able to build your own list of what and whatnot.

Is it possible to be an entrepreneur within a company or at the university? Of course, it is known as “intrapreneurship”, the one undertakes within an organization. Intrapreneurship is the act of behaving like an entrepreneur while working within a large organization. Intrapreneurship is known as the practice of a corporate management style that integrates risk-taking and innovation approaches, as well as the reward and motivational techniques, which are more traditionally thought of as being the province of entrepreneurship.



2. The importance of soft skills in entrepreneurs

Great leaders and entrepreneurs know that "soft skills" are the most difficult to acquire, but the most important for their business. Soft skills are those skills, habits, and behaviours that distinguish us as a professional and that make the difference when undertaking a project, solving a conflict and relating to others. Leadership, productivity, team management, sales and communication skills are among the most valued soft skills for an entrepreneur.

To give us an idea of the importance of these skills we can ask ourselves what would have happened if Steve Jobs had not developed his persuasion and leadership skills, or if Warren Buffett could not delegate with responsibility, or the Dalai Lama had not had his charisma to communicate.

The ability to start new businesses requires constant learning of these skills to develop the project that each one builds. A business plan is not enough. An entrepreneur needs something more if he does not want to fail. He needs that capacity for leadership or synthesis, autonomy, responsibility, critical vision... Moreover, these are just a few examples.

As entrepreneurs, businesspersons or executives, it does not matter what concept you want to use. The development of these skills will allow you to generate suitable environments to promote your project. You need to know which are yours and how you can improve them. You need to know what makes you different. Because entrepreneurship is another way of learning. Day by day, we will be filling our luggage with new knowledge but it is important that from the starting point, we are equipped with the best soft skills that drive our project. Everything adds up.

Are Soft Skills important for Entrepreneurship? As the IED Institute of Entrepreneurship Development says, "being an entrepreneur is a little bit different than being a business owner. You want to work with your customers and clients. You want to show them that this is not just a professional "relationship". You want to build on your products and all your services; you do not want to enforce them to people. You want your customers to see you not your product. You have to be communicative; you have to be ready to cooperate with them. You have to make them feel comfortable and familiar with what you have to offer.

Another great difference between start-up companies and old type businesses is the fact that, old type businesses were actually based on a very standard business plan that, the owners and all the employees have to follow to the letter. Taking chances and risks was not something that all companies used to do. As a young entrepreneur however, you will be facing a lot of competition. Taking risks is a necessity. Do not be afraid to try. After all, your entire endeavour is based on an idea and a vision. Unless you take risks, you will never be able to bring that vision to life.



If you are the owner of a company, you expect your employees to work a full eight hours and deliver the work they are getting paid for. What goes on in their heads is not really your business. What matters is the result. This is most certainly not the case when it comes to start-up companies today.

You need to be able to help your employees deal with any kind of stress they might have. When employees are calm, they are most certainly able to deliver 100% of what they are responsible for. You need to make sure that, people working for your start-up will know that they can trust their boss and that, their working environment is a pleasant place to be. Help them deal with the stress and give them a chance to get to know you and trust you.

Do not make the mistake of thinking about your clients like a simple network that you need to create. They are not objects. They are not just wallets that will open up in order to give you their money. Nowadays, people do not just purchase things without thinking about it first. They want to be able to know that they could trust the company that creates the products and the people behind the desks. If you want your start-up to be a success then you need to make sure that, you will create a "friendship" between you and your customers/clients not a faceless relationship."

"The important thing is not in what competences you have, but in the combination of them", adds Elena Ibáñez, from Singularity Experts. "That's something I've discovered with my project. What good is it for a potential entrepreneur to have a high degree of boldness if he has a lot of dominance? Alternatively, for him to be open to change if his pressure is very high? It is in the combination when you are really optimal to undertake"².

Be a leader not a boss. The more the employees trust the leader, the more they like him as a person, the more likely they are to actually want to really work for him. The leader does not want to be a person that will force the employees to work. He will want to be that person that will empower them, give them reason to work other than just the salary. He wants to make sure that his employees will know he is trying to make a difference and that, as a team, he will be able to achieve great things. Being their leader not the person that bosses them around³.

Are the soft skills for entrepreneurship different from the soft skills of the activity to be undertaken? What do I need to learn in order to become an entrepreneur? You need a technical knowledge base, with a focus on how to sell, and a layer of personal skills, among which resilience stands out. "Training and learning are the raw material of the entrepreneur. Much more than money or ideas," says Mike Cobian, general partner of The Valley Venture Capital, a start-ups investment fund set up by The Valley business school. "There are millions of humans thinking about ideas all the time, the important thing is execution. And that's based on talent and training".

² https://elpais.com/economia/2019/07/29/actualidad/1564407764_779627.html (Accessed July 2019)

³ <https://ied.eu/project-updates/basic-soft-skills-every-startupper/> (Accessed April, 2019)



To be formed, of course, but in what? Beyond the concrete field in which each project wants to develop, there is a body of transversal notions that are necessary. And with a duality that is also a constant in the labour market: that of hard or technical knowledge, on the one hand, and soft or personal skills, on the other.



3. Soft skills for entrepreneurship

We are going to develop the most important soft skills for the entrepreneur. It is not about having all of them, but rather having an important mix of most of them. Many must have worked on the personal journey and others on the professional one.

1. Initiative. To have initiative is to face new situations flexibly, to present resources, ideas and innovative methods, concretizing them in actions tending to create a new order. The initiative is essential to take the step forward and start a business or idea, is not to be afraid, and is to dare. Without these soft skills, it is very difficult to undertake. Initiative to work independently, take the first step, be adventurous and be willing to employ new methods.
2. Leadership. Leadership is a quality that entrepreneurs must develop: being a leader has to do with the ability to influence others and support them to carry out tasks to achieve a common goal. To demand and to point is easy, the difficult thing is to put the example that is the work of the leader. To be a good leader, you must know the team.
3. Negotiation. Without sales, there is no business, and as you are sold, you are treated, under these premises you must work the posture when negotiating and selling. The best result of a negotiation is win-win, at least that is what most specialists on the subject agree on. Nieremberg assures that negotiation is an undertaking that is made in cooperation, that it is not "a game", and that in every good negotiation someone has to win something.
4. Networking. The way someone presents himself or herself, says goodbye or starts a conversation is the key when starting a business, effective networking can lead to levels that few people can imagine, most entrepreneurs who attend networking events go unnoticed and lose a gold mine in contacts and relationships. Networking is important and necessary to expand opportunities for professional and business growth. Networking means increasing your network of professional contacts. Without contacts, there is no business.
5. Communication. It is crucial for an entrepreneur; to transmit the content of an idea or a product to a group of people in the environment they develop, customers, employees, other companies. The entrepreneur must be aware of the importance of effective communication as an element of business strategy, and competitive improvements of the company. To be an effective communicator it is important to take into account that we all perceive the world differently.
6. Creativity. Creativity is necessary, at a large and a small scale, because starting from scratch and with little money demands to be imaginative in every detail. In addition, the changes throughout the exercise imply many gifts of imagination to be able to face the different unexpected challenges that have to be faced. Special value will be given to a person who is capable of adding value to his or her work project. Someone who knows



- how to make proposals, who thinks of alternative paths to the usual ones and is able to get excited with them and infect them.
7. Plan and organization. Do not confuse being busy with being productive. Have you ever spent days going from meeting to meeting, but at the end of the day, you feel like you have not made a single step forward? Sure, that is why it is crucial to work on personal productivity. Being a hyper-productive person, in addition to allowing you to optimize your time, will really help you achieve the full success that most people do not have.
 8. Teamwork and cooperation. Collaboration is essential, as the team is key to getting a project off the ground. The idea is worth what it is worth, but the fundamental thing is to know how to develop it and to know which team to develop it with.
 9. Self-confidence. The key to entrepreneurial success! It believes that you are capable of achieving the objectives you set yourself. When we talk about trust is to believe that everything will be fine, that despite there is a margin of error, and success is most likely.
 10. Self-control. Self-control allows a person to make wise decisions, avoid the temptation of counterproductive or inconvenient actions, be able to withstand difficulties, have sufficient lucidity in times of crisis, make use of emotional intelligence to adapt to a changing environment and achieve goals.
 11. People address. The entrepreneur will have to have management skills of people, the first thing will be to detect the needs of the company, choose the staff that best suits (develop a good selection and hiring process), have a regulation on Human Resources, generate a good working environment, congratulate workers for their achievements. Create an organization chart with which to manage the staff, analyse the jobs and generate a training plan for staff.
 12. Commitment to the organization. A leader's commitment to his company is a bond based on his degree of emotional and intellectual involvement with the organization... The commitment of all, entrepreneur, employees and collaborators, contributes positively to the efficiency, productivity, satisfaction and success of the organization.
 13. Empathy. Evidently, to lead a team and necessary also to convince everyone you meet along the way: suppliers, partners, investors, customers... an entrepreneur who is not empathetic is difficult to convince and lead.
 14. Flexibility and change management. Effective change management will make the difference between companies that want to survive the 2020 business landscape. Leadership style, level of commitment and communication formats should not go unnoticed in times of transformation. Linear organisational structures and collaborative culture: key elements for changing the course of the company and leaving behind the old mind-set. Times of change, times of reflection invite us to prepare a new roadmap that responds to the "here and now" and that we do not forget, it expires very quickly.
 15. Customer orientation. It is necessary to know the user to offer personalized experiences. In addition, this is the difficulty. Today the user is not a mass, it is an individual with specific and differentiated tastes and behaviours to whom personalized experiences must be offered, although it seems that only 10% of companies are prepared to offer



this personalized experience and have the user at the centre of their strategy at an integral level. However, this path is the key to improving sales, the reputation of the company and the image of the services offered, in short, is necessary to differentiate itself from the competence.

16. Achievement orientation. Achievement orientation is defined as the effort made by people as individuals and the work team as a unit, to meet the objectives set in a project, within the expected expectations. Management in organizations requires a high sense of commitment to results. The difference between average and outstanding management lies in the ability to identify the best way to use the resources available to it and its ability to develop in the work team a routine capable of producing outstanding and differentiating results. The daily work that can lead to routine is not necessarily synonymous with boredom due to the repetitive condition of the task. This is where the importance of the sense of doing the task for which we have been hired appears.
17. Strategic orientation. In dynamic environments, organizations have to maintain constant strategic change. Their survival depends on their ability to renew models, their flexibility in responding to market impulses, that is why entrepreneurs are the engine of the change process and those who make strategic decisions based on their beliefs about the environment, the strategy, the business portfolio and the state of the organization.
18. Analytical thinking. Analytical Thinking is an ability to understand situations and solve problems by separating their constituent parts, meditating on them in a logical and systematic way. These techniques allow improving the depth of the analysis in any aspect of the professional activity providing, to those who use them, an advantage that becomes visible in the results obtained. They are also a fast and efficient way to improve our agenda and manage time.
19. Conceptual thinking. Conceptual thinking is the use of creative, conceptual or inductive reasoning applied to existing concepts or to define new concepts. Conceptual thinking is understanding a situation or problem by assembling the parts in order to establish wholeness.
20. Efficiency and quality. Improving this competence will allow the use of resources in the most optimal way possible to achieve an objective. Quality is more than meeting the requirements. It is to deliver to customers not what they want but what they did not know they wanted exceeding expectations. The level of efficiency and quality can be improved by better organizing and planning the activities to be developed and/or innovating. Therefore, efficiency and quality have to do with the enthusiasm that is reflected in the integrity of people and how proud they are of their work. This competence is closely related to the fulfilment of commitments and the search for opportunity.
21. Learning and use of knowledge. Each entrepreneurship process is different, but the vast majority agree that you must take a key role and make decisions using your knowledge, experience, skills and intuition. You will also have to be alert to market trends and developments, so you'll have to be in lifelong learning to become obsolete.



4. How should students develop soft skills for entrepreneurship?

Entrepreneurial learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom, in dynamic environments where knowledge intersects with doing and creative experimentation, where students and faculty learn together through the productive application of knowledge. Although it is true that there are careers closely related to business, the truth is that in none of them will you learn how to be an entrepreneur. That is to say, you can be taught how to create a company and how to manage it, but being an entrepreneur implies the development of skills and attitudes that can only be acquired through experience.

What will be the role of Soft Skills in the classroom in order to promote entrepreneurship? What tools or knowledge drive this type of skills and what should be the role and training of new teachers? New technologies are already transforming the classroom and promoting new training methods such as Flipped Classroom or maker culture, but equally important are 'Soft Skills'.

In this sense, the impulse of vocations in the field of STEM careers is directly related to the impulse of Soft Skills. In this sense, the inclusion of robotics and programming in the classroom encourages the development of skills such as teamwork, leadership, problem solving and adaptation to change.

Is there an ideal time to train? Is it necessary to fill the backpack before or is it better to do it while walking, at the University? It depends on the route that has been done before. If you are a young student or just out of college, it is best to spend some time prior to training. However, if you are a professional with several years of experience and you already know well the sector in which you want to undertake, the best thing is to launch and, in the meantime, learn the technological leg. "Both formulas can be successful; the important thing is that it is never too late".

Entrepreneurship is a set of skills that can be taught. In a professional context where the labour market is increasingly changing, innovative projects and workers willing to take control of their own projects are increasingly valued.

The characteristics necessary for entrepreneurship at the classroom:

- Ability to take responsibility and be ready for constant learning.
- Management and planning skills to lead and implement a project from scratch.
- Ability to adapt to change and solve problems in order to carry out the necessary actions in the event of unforeseen events.
- Emotional control, self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-criticism.
- Think creatively and take risks. Have initiative and interest in innovation.



- Know how to transmit ideas and lead groups thanks to a great communicative capacity.

The entrepreneur, in short, must be a person with very diverse characteristics. The good news is that these attributes do not have to be taken for granted; they are competencies taught in the classroom. When we speak of entrepreneurial competence, we must also speak of entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurship is the development of an attitude, and not only implies having some knowledge; it is acting proactively to make problems, opportunities.

The pedagogical methodologies to develop entrepreneurial competence are those that conceive the student as the protagonist of the teaching or learning process and the teacher as a guide. The proposals that fit into an entrepreneurial curriculum are the actions that promote interaction and participation of all, those that pose challenges and challenges close to the reality of the student body; those that stimulate creativity and initiative.

Teachers must be able to promote students' ability to communicate and solve problems on their own. In order for students to develop the desired competencies, interactive methodologies should be applied, such as problem-based learning, peer work or cooperative learning. Ideally, these entrepreneurial competences will be transversal in all subjects. It is not necessary to create a specific subject, but to integrate methodologies throughout the academic year and work in an interdisciplinary way.



5. Conclusions

In general, enterprising people, like people employed by organizations, have a very large need for soft skills. Employees need soft skills to develop their work with respect to the objectives of the organization. Skills such as teamwork, resilience, empathy, are necessary both by employees and by entrepreneurs.

Some soft skills depend on the job performed, for example a building architect must have a global and comprehensive vision of the product, an administrative must have order and clarity. An entrepreneur must have a very broad set of soft skills, since he must understand both the soft skills of his technical work, and those that his employees must have.

In addition, there are other common soft skills among entrepreneurs. Negotiation, leadership, resilience, long-term vision, are just examples of soft skills needed to undertake. As a result of meetings with entrepreneurs held under the project, the main conclusion is that an entrepreneur must have three competency maps as a priority:

- Entrepreneurship Map (approach).
 - Resilience
 - Long-term vision
 - Negotiation
 - Decision Making
 - People management
- Job position Map
- Employees in charge Map

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the other main conclusion is to propose to readers and researchers who propose projects to study which soft skills are the most suitable for undertaking. This need can be met in the European environment and thus position the member countries as innovative elements of the common economy.



All results of these project can be found at the corresponding section of the long-term webpage:
<http://www.softskills.upv.es>